

Doctrinal Statement & Constitution of The River, River Falls, Wisconsin



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Table of Contents

Pages 3-4	Doctrinal Statement
Pages 5-11.....	Constitution
Page 5	Name
Page 5	Purpose
Page 5	Membership
Page 6-7	Elders
Page 7	Team Leaders
Page 7-8	Staff Members
Page 8	Role of the Lead Pastor
Page 9	Selection of the Lead Pastor
Page 9	Property
Page 9-10	Amendments
Page 10	Statement of Cooperation
Page 10.....	Ethical and Moral Issues
Page 10-11	Indemnification
Page 12	Core Values
Page 14	Application for Membership

Doctrinal Statement

1. **The Word of God** - The Bible is God's written word. God the Holy Spirit directed human authors to write down just what He wanted, without error. As God's word it has absolute authority over everything we believe and do. Without the Bible we could never gain an accurate understanding of God or know how to appropriately respond to Him. (Mark 13:31; John 8:31-32; Acts 20:32; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21)

86797600. **God** – The God of the Bible is the one true God, and He exists in three persons. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit fully share all the characteristics of God and, therefore, are equally deserving of worship and honor. The three persons of the Trinity have distinct, but complimentary roles in the fulfillment of God's flawless plan.
(Gen 1:1,26; Deut. 6:4; Matt 28:19; John 1:1,3; 4:24; Rom 1:19-20; Eph 4:5-6)

86797601. **The Father** - God the Father is the Creator of heaven and earth, which He spoke into existence and designed to give every person an awareness of Himself. The Father has complete knowledge of and authority over all events, past, present, and future. As God's people, we can live with confidence that He uses every event for our ultimate good and His honor. (Matt 23:9; Luke 10:21-22; John 3:16;6:27; Rom 1:7; 1 Tim 1:1-2; 2:5-6; 1 Pet 1:3; Rev 1:6; 4:11)

86797602. **Jesus Christ** - Jesus is the one and only Son of God who always existed with the Father. While remaining fully God, He became a man and entered human history. He was conceived within Mary while she was still a virgin. He was born and lived His whole life free from sin. He was murdered by being nailed to the cross. Following His burial Jesus came back to life, demonstrating that the Father accepted His willing sacrifice for our sin. He returned to heaven and now champions our cause in the presence of the Father. (Matt 1:18-25; 20:28; Luke 1:26-38; John 1:1; 20:28,30-31; Acts 1:11; 2:23; 4:27-28; 7:52; Rom 5:6-8; 6:9-10; 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 1:4-5; 1 Pet 2:21-24; Heb 7:25; 9:28)

86797603. **The Holy Spirit** - The Holy Spirit is also fully God. He helps us understand the greatness of the Father and the Son. He gives God's people special abilities to serve Him. He shows us where we fall short and gives us the power to live out God's plan: becoming more like Jesus. The Spirit assures that we really are God's children and helps us enjoy all of life as worship. (John 3:6-8; 14:14-26; 15:26-27; 16:7-14; Rom 8:8, 13-14, 26; 12:4-8; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:11,19; 12:1-31; Gal 4:29; 5:18; Eph 3:16; 4:1-13; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 1:7; Tit 3:5; Rom 15:16)

86797604. **Humanity** – God made humans, male and female, in His image. We were made for His glory and designed to enjoy a relationship with Him characterized by intimacy and trust. But, Adam and Eve chose to listen to Satan's lies rather than follow the truth of God. Their rebellion infected all of us. Every human being is born alienated from God and with a compulsion to defy God's direction. So, we are headed for judgment, without the capability of changing our own situation. (Gen. 1:27; 2:7; 3:1-24; Ps. 14:1-3; Isa. 43:7; 53:6; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 1:18-20; 3:10-18, 23; 5:12; 6:23; Col. 1:16)

86797605. **Spiritual Birth** - Because of God's unfailing love, He took the initiative to rescue us. Sin requires death, which is why Jesus died on the cross. He was punished for our sins, satisfying the justice of God and opening His mercy to the guilty. When the Holy Spirit shows a person that the death of Jesus is the only satisfactory payment for sin, He also gives the power to turn from sin and trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Those who turn from their sin and trust Jesus are completely forgiven and have eternal life. Jesus calls this

experience being “born of the Spirit,” and it marks the beginning of the Christian life. (Gen 1:26; 2:17; 3:19; 5:2; Ps. 51:7; Prov 28:13; Ecc 2:11; Jer 17:9; John 1:12-13; 3:14-16; 5:24,30; 8:12; 10:26-28; Rom 3:19-20; 5:19; 8:1-17; 9:14-24; 2 Cor 5:17; 2 Thess 1:9; 2:13; Tit 3:5-7; 1 John 1:9; James 1:14; Rev 20:10, 14-15; 21:1-8)

86797606. **The Church** - The Church is people and includes everyone who has experienced spiritual birth through faith in Jesus Christ. Those who are followers of Jesus Christ also come together to form local churches who worship, serve and grow together. We grow in relationship to God through the study and application of His Word, which also leads us to love one another. Jesus is head of the Church. The Church is to do the things Jesus gave us to do and help others learn about the Good News of forgiveness and life in Jesus Christ. (Acts 1:8; 2:41-42; Eph 2:19-22; 5:19-21; Col 1:18; Heb 10:23-25)

86797607. **Cooperation with Other Christians** – The Church is founded by Christ and includes everyone who trusts and follows Him. Because of this, God wants Christians to be unified in truth and mission. The love of God is made visible as we love each other and work together. (Matt. 5:14-16; John 13:34-35; 15:4-17; Eph. 4:25-5:2; Phil. 2:1-4; 1 John 4:7-12)

86797608. **How Christians Should Live** - Christians have the privilege of living free of the control of sin that had us trapped before the Holy Spirit gave us new life. We can now make progress in living in a way that glorifies God, maintains our freedom and lets others know God does change lives! It is for our best that we learn to live what the Bible teaches. As we grow we will see God changing our character to be more like the character of Jesus. People around us will see that God really is good. God's goodness changes our character in areas such as sexual purity (purity in regards to homosexual sin and sexual relations outside of marriage), freedom from sinful addictions (such as drug and alcohol abuse and pornography), and a commitment to honesty and integrity (such as the faithful payment of taxes and debts). Pleasing God includes both fleeing from sin and pursuing the fruit of God's Spirit (Galatians 5:16-23). More detail on these and other important ethical and moral issues are covered in a series of statements in Article 12 at the end of this constitution (Rom 13:13-14; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Tim 1:9-11; John 14:15, 23-24; Rom 12:1-2; 1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 9:6-13; Eph 4:13; Col 1:9-10, 28; Heb 12:1-2; 1 John 2:3-6).

86797609. **Two Practices Jesus Gave the Church** - Jesus gave the church two "pictures" that remind us and show others what God has done for His people.

One is **baptism**. This "picture" is to tell those around us what God has already done in us. Baptism illustrates **dying to our old life, receiving new life and rising from the dead to live as a new creation of God and parallels Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. The new believer is "buried" or submerged in water, symbolizing death and then brought up out of the water demonstrating new life in Christ. (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 2:38-42; 8:36-39; Rom 6:1-11).**

The second "picture" is called **communion**, or the Lord's Supper. This is meant to help us remember that Jesus died for us. The family of God (believers and followers of Jesus Christ) shares bread, which is a symbol of Jesus' body; and wine (or juice), which is symbolic of Jesus' blood. The Bible tells us to continue this memorial until He returns. (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:23-26)

86797610. **Freedom and Responsibility** - When a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit lives in that person and will teach him/her according to the Bible. Each person can speak and relate directly to God and is accountable to God. The local church also has freedom and accountability before God and should not be controlled by any authority other than Jesus Christ. (Acts 5:29; 20:28-32; Rom 14:7-9; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19-20; Eph 2:22; 2 Cor 3:7-18; Col 1:18; 1 Tim 2:5).

13. **The End of Time** - The return of Jesus is the great anticipated day of each believer. When Jesus returns, He will fulfill His promises. Every person who has ever lived will face God for a final judgment. Those who are not born of the Spirit will experience endless suffering separated from God. It will be hell! Christians, however, will live in pure and complete joy as they behold the magnificence of the glory of God. It will be heaven!

(Matt 16:27; Mark 14:62; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor 4:5; 15:20-24,35-58; Phil 3:20; 1 Thess 4:14-18; 2 Thess 1:6-10; 2 Tim 4:1; Tit 2:13; Rev 20:4-15)

Constitution

Article 1 - The Name

The name of this church shall be **The River** and will be located in or near River Falls, WI.

Article 2 - The Purpose

The River exists to: Encounter and Enjoy God Together and Share Him with Others.

Article 3 - Membership at The River

1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 2:41-42

1. People who become members at The River must fulfill the following conditions. Members of The River may join any serving team (Articles 4 and 7 explain other conditions for leadership in our church):
To become a member of The River, you must first:
 - a. accept Christ as Savior and Lord and write out a testimony of salvation for the elders;
 - b. be baptized by immersion in water;
 - c. agree by signature with the doctrinal statement and constitution of The River;
 - d. have attended The River for 6 months (otherwise, by the discretion of the elders);
 - e. have satisfactorily completed the Membership Class (to be offered regularly);
 - f. complete a personal interview with the pastor or one of the elders of The River;
 - g. receive the unanimous agreement of the elders and vote of membership at a business meeting of the church.
2. New members will be recognized in a regular church service and be allowed to vote at the church's annual business meeting.
 - a. At the annual meeting, members may vote on the approval of new elders, the continuation of acting elders, decisions on the acquisition or disposition of church property, and the annual budget.
 - b. The membership role may be reviewed periodically for the purpose of establishing a list of current membership.
 - c. Members may also vote at specially called meetings called by the elders of the church (two weeks notice will be given for all such meetings).
3. Members may serve as church delegates to Converge Great Lakes or Converge Worldwide conferences as appointed by the elders of the church.
4. Regular attendees at The River may serve on a ministry team apart from membership by completing the Ministry Application. The Ministry Application asks for agreement on the main points of our church beliefs and practices. This application will be reviewed by the elders; and, if approved, training and serving for team ministry may begin at the Team Leader's discretion.

5. Youth membership is available for students ages 13-17. The same requirements for membership and service apply as for adults (including the Preliminary Application for team service). Youth membership is required for positions of leadership in the Youth Ministry group for students in 6th through 12th grades. Youth members are not eligible to vote at Converge Great Lakes or Converge Worldwide conferences or at the annual meeting of The River.

Article 4 - Eldership at the River

1. The book of Acts gives several examples of elders being chosen by the apostles. Since we do not have apostles to perform this function today, the abiding principle is that spiritual maturity and insight is needed to choose spiritually qualified men to lead and advise the church (Acts 14, Titus 1, 1 Timothy 3). Thus the selection process is:
 - a. New elders shall be added as the need arises;
 - b. Candidates must submit their own names to the elders of the church (1 Timothy 3:1);
 - c. Candidates must have background checks, complete a thorough application, and be unanimously approved by the current elders; after which they are presented to the church at a regular Sunday morning service as apprentice elders;
 - d. Candidates must first serve as a team leader for at least six months prior to, or during, their apprenticeship (i.e. team leader or co-leader for a existing ministry team or an ad hoc team organized for special events—an elder does not have to be a team leader while serving as an elder);
 - e. Apprenticeship requirements must be completed under the supervision of the elders (see the Elder's Handbook or By-Laws for the details of the elder apprenticeship program);
 - f. After completion of the above, candidates are interviewed again by the elders and, if unanimously approved, they are presented to the church at the next annual business meeting for an approval by 75% vote of the members of the church in attendance at the meeting;
 - g. The church will ordain the approved elders within two months of such a vote.
2. This constitution holds that elders are also designated in the New Testament as men who are regarded as pastors and overseers (Acts 20; 1 Timothy 2-3). Their duties include the following:
 - a. Elders are charged with the biblical responsibility of the oversight of the church. All policy, staff, budgeting, and ministry plans are ultimately the responsibility of the Elders. The Elders may appoint individuals or special teams for limited periods of service to complete assigned tasks, especially to assist the Lead Pastor in areas and aspects of ministry that cannot, or should not, be placed upon the Lead Pastor. The Elders also oversee the team ministries of The River and are responsible for the manner in which these ministries are conducted.
 - b. The biblical qualifications for elder are all directed to men. The River recognizes that God's order for the church is to have male leadership in this office. This is not a matter of giftedness or ability, but the sovereign design of God as revealed in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 11; 1 Timothy 2-3).
 - c. Decision making on the elder level is by the unanimous consent of all elders. Differences of opinion are to be given a time of prayer and fasting. Although apprentice elders are expected to contribute to the discussion, wisdom, and work of evaluating church issues, they are not eligible to vote in the final decision making responsibilities of the elders.
 - d. The elders may call for special meetings to conduct important church business.

3. Each elder shall give a one year commitment at the church annual meeting in January in the form of an oral testimonial at the meeting. If an elder steps down from this commitment during the year, he may not become a candidate for eldership again for three years, unless the elders announce an exception to this during a regularly scheduled Sunday morning worship service (such candidacy does not require apprenticeship).
4. Elders (including the Lead Pastor) disqualified from serving because of sin must be dealt with according to the teaching of 1 Timothy 3 and 5 and Titus 1. No accusation against any elder will be received by the elders unless substantiated by two or three witnesses (see procedures in the By-Laws). He may only be considered for candidate status again after completing a counseling program appropriate to his spiritual and personal needs and in accord with the issue for which he was disqualified for eldership (and then only at the discretion of the current elders).
5. A plurality of elders requires at least two qualified and approved elders to oversee the church. If two qualified elders are not present at The River, a request will be made to a Converge Great Lakes church to provide elders from their church to The River for this requirement. These elders must be approved by the membership, must participate in the life of the church as members, and are thus qualified to participate in the decision making process without being an apprentice.
6. In the case of a vacancy among the elders of the church, replacements may be selected among formerly ordained elders of The River at a specially called meeting of the church.

Article 5 – Team Leaders of The River

Team Leaders at The River function much like the Bible describes the role of a deacon—someone who has been recognized as a faithful servant of Christ in the church and who is appointed by the church to perform a specific ministry (1 Timothy 3). These specially appointed servants have certain personal and character qualifications that must first be met, and then they may serve in their appointed tasks. Team Leaders report to the Elders and are responsible for organizing their team members to effectively serve in their ministry area.

To become a Team Leader at The River, a man or woman must first become a full member, having completed the membership class, been in attendance for at least 6 months, have completed the necessary background checks, and have had an interview with the elders. Leaders must also agree to participate in the rotation of monthly leaders' meetings with the elders.

Article 6 - Staff Members of The River

In accordance with New Testament principles of leadership, paid ministry staff members are not to be selected solely on the basis of performance or professional credentials. Ministry staff members serve as role models for other believers. Therefore, spiritual qualifications and lifestyle are of the utmost importance. We acknowledge the following criteria for the selection of ministry staff members:

1. Staff members should have a love for the Lord and his leading into service with The River as evidenced by fulfilling all the requirements for church membership before assuming staff duties. Since The River is committed to team ministry, all new staff members shall also meet the requirements for Team Leadership except for completing 6 months of attendance at The River. Until the 6 months are completed, the staff member is eligible for pay, but will be considered “in training” or “an apprentice.”

2. Gifts, abilities, and credentials that qualify this individual for the ministry responsibilities as well as a personal style that will strengthen and compliment the ministry staff of The River.

The elders shall be responsible for the oversight of ministry staff, including staff selection and dismissal, when necessary. Each ministry staff member will be accountable to an elder. The roles and job

descriptions for staff members require approval of the elders. Staff salaries shall be determined by the elders and approved by the membership at the annual meeting.

Article 7 - The Role of the Lead Pastor

1. Consistent with the New Testament teaching regarding spiritual gifts, it is evident that the Lead Pastor, like any member of the body, is uniquely gifted and should seek to serve within his gift area. The Lead Pastor is the primary teaching pastor of the church. He is responsible for the spiritual equipping and oversight of the entire congregation and is the first among equals¹ with those who serve as the elders. He is the spokesman for the elders to the congregation and is directly responsible to them for the carrying out of his duties in the church (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Peter 5:2-4; 1 Corinthians 12). This means that the Lead Pastor (as an elder) is responsible to lead, advise, and guide the elders and the church according to the Word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit. He must also implement the unanimous decisions of the elders.
2. In addition to his shepherding role as an elder, the Lead Pastor is primarily to be a teacher of the Word of God, the Bible. He is to teach and exhort both by the spoken word and by his example. His goal is to help bring people to maturity of faith through insightful and accurate presentation and proclamation of the Bible, equipping them to be the true ministers of the body. As a teacher, he must stress both the understanding and the application of God's Word.
3. The Lead Pastor may, at his discretion, delegate any task pertaining to the administration and oversight of the church staff. Delegation may be done through individuals or councils. In the event of the delegation of a task, those individuals or councils shall be directly responsible to the Lead Pastor, and he shall remain responsible for the task. The Lead Pastor should not be responsible to serve in areas unrelated to his primary function as a teaching elder and should maintain a proper balance of prayer, teaching, shepherding, and leadership (Acts 20:28; Rom. 12:6-7; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:15; 4:1-4; 1 Thess. 2:4-5, 10-12; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:1-5; Eph. 4:11-12; James 2:22; Rom. 10:14-15; 1 Cor. 9:3-14; Gal. 6:6; 1 Thess. 5:12-18; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 3 John 5-8).
4. Teaching within the body should not be limited to the Lead Pastor. The New Testament emphasizes the need for teaching elders and the utilization of other members who are gifted to teach, providing a variety of teaching styles, input, and role models (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:1-2; 5:17; Titus 1:5-9).

¹ The phrase "first among equals" does not refer to greater decision making authority among the elders of the church but to the Lead Pastor's role among the elders as their spokesman and representative to the church. In this role the Lead Pastor is also the primary, but not only, person who places a vision for ministry and overall purpose of the church before the congregation (see *Biblical Eldership*, revised, by Alexander Strauch [Lewis & Roth, 1995], pp. 45-50).

5. The Lead Pastor shall be given a sabbatical in the course of his ministry. After seven years (or at the discretion of the elders), the Lead Pastor may spend a three month period removed from pastoral responsibilities for the purpose of rest, focus, learning, strengthening relationships with his family and with God. He is responsible for arranging sufficient replacement for the pastoral ministry in his absence.

Article 8 - Selection of the Lead Pastor

1. Vacancy –
 - a. Vacancies may occur by either resignation or by discipline of the Lead Pastor. In the case of resignation, a special meeting of the membership shall be called for the purpose of accepting or rejecting the resignation. In the case of rejecting a resignation, the members of the church will recommend that the Lead Pastor reconsider his resignation and that the Conflict Resolution Committee of Converge Great Lakes be consulted for reconciliation. If the membership accepts the resignation by majority vote, then the Elders will begin a search for a candidate to fill the position.
 - b. The Elders shall appoint one Elder who is already ordained to be an Acting Lead Pastor.
 - c. No discipline or rebuke of a Lead Pastor will be considered by the Elders unless according to 1 Timothy 5:17-21. The two or three witnesses of wrong-doing by the Lead Pastor or any Elder may be by a church member or an Elder. Any accusations must be ascertained and affirmed by the Elders. The Elders must decide whether any given and substantiated accusation would necessitate the resignation of another Elder or Lead Pastor.

2. Selection of the Lead Pastor

Once the Elders have selected a candidate, evaluated and approved him according to the Elder qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, he will be presented to the congregation as a nominee for the office of Lead Pastor. No candidate may be presented to the congregation who has not first been closely evaluated and approved by the Elders. The Elders will develop a suitable process of exposure and evaluation by the congregation. At the conclusion of the congregational evaluation, **a 75% majority** vote of the membership in attendance at a meeting called for that purpose will be required for approval and appointment. Notice will be given to all members at least two weeks prior to a meeting to be held for the purpose of voting on a Lead Pastor. It should be understood that a congregational vote does not constitute a call from God, but gives indication of a desire and willingness to follow the leadership of this man and affirms his role as an Elder (Heb. 13:17).

Article 9 - Property Acquisition and Disposition

The Elders are responsible to guide the process of property acquisition and disposition. Prior to making any legal agreement to purchase or sell real property², the Elders are required to present the proposal to the members. A majority vote of the members present will be required for approval of acquisition or disposition. In the event God should lead The River of River Falls to disband, the Elders will present the proposal to the members with a proposal to use any remaining assets to further the purpose of The River in

²Real Property is defined in this Article as Land and Buildings and whatever the church has purchased for the use of its ministries in both the church office and the regular services of the church.

church planting. A majority vote of members present will be required to approve the disbanding and donation of assets.

Article 10 –Amendments to the Doctrinal Statement and the Constitution

This document was drafted by faithful but fallible people. Should the Spirit of God point out the need to revise this document in any way, the Elders will present suggested revisions to the membership of this body for ratification by majority vote of the members present at a meeting called for that purpose.

Minor revision not effecting change in the theology, ministry philosophy or overall structure and government shall be made at the discretion of the Elders (i.e. grammar, clarification of ideas considered confusing, added Scriptural support, etc.).

Article 11 - Statement of Cooperation

In order to accomplish what Jesus has given us to do, we network with other churches of similar doctrine and objectives through a denomination. By “similar doctrine” we mean basic agreement with The River’s Doctrinal Statement, points 1-10 and 12-13. Our local church is voluntarily a part of Converge Great Lakes and Converge Worldwide. If it ever becomes necessary, we (the membership of the church) may withdraw from the conference at our discretion. The denomination exists and functions to help local churches make more and better followers of Jesus Christ. We also join with independent churches and churches of other denominations when we believe this relationship will help us do what God wants us to do. (Acts 15:36, 41; 16:5; 1 Cor 16:1; Gal 1:1-3; Rev 1:4,10-11)

Article 12 -- Ethical and Moral issues Related to Team Service at The River.

Whether one is handing out food, performing music, or preaching a sermon, it is service “in Jesus name” (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:23-25; Matt 10:40-42). This means that obedience to Christ is tied to serving him in the church. That is why those who serve on a ministry team at The River must agree with and be committed to live in accord with the following examples of biblical teaching. Salvation and repentance makes everyone clean before God to serve, no matter what the sin in a person’s background or lapse while a member of the church; thus, these points are not meant to shame and exclude, but to heal and restore:

1. Sexual relationships should be practiced only between a man and woman who are married. Such relations prior to marriage and “live-in” relationships are wrong, as are extra-marital adulterous affairs. (Genesis 2:18-25; Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 20:10-21; 1 Corinthians 7);
2. Human life and personhood begin at conception in the mother’s womb and, thus, abortion is the wrongful taking of human life. The River seeks to be a place of healing and comfort for all who have repented of this. (Exodus 20:13; Psalm 22:9-10; 51:5; 139:13-14.);
3. The River seeks to share and minister the love of God to the homosexual and lesbian community; but is convinced that the practice of this lifestyle is sin. (Leviticus 18:19-23; Romans 1:18-32);
4. Those who follow Christ are called to live holy lives reflecting the reputation of Jesus in what we say and do. This includes the commitment to abstain from the use of pornographic materials, the abuse of drugs, alcohol, or other destructive habits that would bring shame on the name and reputation of Christ. People need to be ministered to if they are enslaved to the kind of behaviors described in Galatians 5:19-21. They are not ready to serve the needs of others until they begin reflecting the fruit of

the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22-23 (See the Scriptures found in section 10 of the Doctrinal Statement, "How a Christian Should Live").

Article 13 – Indemnification Statement

The River will indemnify any and all persons who may serve or who have served at any time as a pastor, associate pastor, or in another executive level staff position in the church, as a church officer or member of a church board or committee, as a youth leader for a church youth organization, or as a teacher or

counselor of the church elected or appointed by the church of any board or committee of the church, against any and all expenses, including amounts paid upon judgments, counsel fees, and amounts paid in settlement (before or after suit is commenced) actually and necessarily incurred by such persons in connection with the defense or settlement of any claim, action, suit, or proceeding in which they, or any of them, are made parties, or a party or which may be asserted against any such person be adjudged in any action, suit, or proceeding to be liable for duties. Such indemnification will be in addition to any other rights to which those indemnified may be entitled under any law, bylaw, agreement or otherwise.

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The River's Core Values

Reaching Up -- Treasuring Jesus

Our first value is to reach up with our hearts and treasure Jesus Christ. We aim at helping believers treasure Jesus above everyone & everything this world can offer. What we mean by this is that our heavenly Father with the risen Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit in us is to be our greatest value. He is to be wholly cherished as the treasury of all of God's grace. We hold that the first evidence of true followers of Jesus is that they "love the Lord (the best of all beings) with all their heart, with all their soul, with their entire mind and with all their strength" (Matthew 22:37) So, we define Christianity not just as sentiments toward God and Christ but true love (holy affections) that we demonstrate by growing in Christ, worshipping Christ, overcoming sin and thus growing in loving obedience to Christ. This happens by correctly teaching believers to grow spiritually by investing their lives in the word of God, family devotions, private and public worship, Bible study, prayer, and by sharing their lives with other believers. John 17:3, John 6:48

Reaching In -- Becoming like Jesus

Our second value is to reach in to other believers at The River to help them become more like Jesus. What we aim to do here, carrying out the command of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20, is to teach the people of The River to become and make disciples ..., teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." This value is marked by two objectives: 1) to bring all believers to maturity and 2) enable mature believers to lead others, as determined by their individual gifts. We endeavor to bring God's people to a place where they are closely following Christ and are becoming more like HIM in all respects. We believe this abiding relationship instills an indwelling desire that moves God's people beyond a mere Sunday-morning, event-oriented Christianity to a single-minded, whole-life obedience marked by self-denial and a radical surrender of life to His lordship. Our passion is to grow up a generation of believers that are marked by selfless love to Christ and devotion to the Church and others. This kind of love among God's people grows in a venue of Bible studies, family worship, children's ministry, small groups, personal serving, prayer groups, women's mentoring, men's fellowship, youth discipleship, and preaching/ teaching God's Word. John 17:17, John 17:22, John 8:31, Luke 14:26-27.

Reaching Out – Sharing Jesus with Others

Our third value is to reach out to those who don't know Jesus Christ. This value is generally called evangelism, or sharing the gospel ("good news") with those who have not yet heard it.

Jesus himself said; “follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). We aim at being intentional about sharing the greatest story that has ever been told as summarized in these words; “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). This means that God has determined to unleash the good news of the gospel through His people as they share, teach, live and preach the substance of that message. We purposefully aim at doing this primarily through church planting, short and long termed mission-focused projects, works of mercy, family and personal witness to unbelievers, hospitality, and gospel-centered Bible studies. The intention is to impact others’ lives with the love of Christ, the light of His truth, and sharing His good news as God provides opportunities to do so. John 3:16, Acts 16:31.

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Application for Membership

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

1. I have read the Doctrinal Statement and Constitution.

Yes No

2. I am in agreement with the Doctrinal Statement and Constitution. If no, please explain specific issues.

Yes No

3. I began attending The River approximately _____ (date).

4. I have attended the required membership class.

Yes No

5. I have been desire to be baptized by immersion.

6. I believe that my sins are forgiven and that I have eternal life because:

7. I commit to support the ministry of The River through consistent participation, the exercise of my gifting in service and faithful stewardship of finances.

Yes No

Interviewed by: _____

Date: _____

Approved for membership.

Approved for youth membership.

Not approved at this time. Reason(s): _____

Conditionally approved. Action required: _____